

News from the

**U.S. Senate Committee on
Health, Education, Labor and Pensions**

Michael B. Enzi (Wyoming), Chairman



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***DEMOCRATS SAY NO TO SMALL BUSINESS, BLOCK FIRST
BIPARTISAN HEALTH INSURANCE REFORM BILL IN DECADE,
ENZI SAYS***

Washington, D.C. – U.S. Senator Mike Enzi (R-Wyo.), Chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee, today said he is deeply disappointed that dozens of Democrats have moved to block a vote on S.1955, which would give working families better access to affordable health insurance, and relief from rising health care costs.

“This effort clarifies the minority’s commitment to special interests over the needs of America’s small businesses and working families,” Enzi said. “It disappoints me that some of my colleagues are unwilling to move forward on a bill that will significantly reduce insurance premiums for small businesses and bring many new people into the insurance market.

“After a decade of gridlock and no real chance to pass genuine health insurance reform through the Senate, this bill is the only light at the end of the tunnel for small business and working families.” Enzi said he will continue to work for meaningful health care reform despite this vote, adding that “working families need to know where every Senator stands on solving the health insurance crisis in our nation.”

Ironically, much of the effort to block S.1955 has been spearheaded by Senators from states rated among the top-10 most expensive in the nation for family small business policies, including several northeastern states. Among its many reforms, the bill will streamline the current hodgepodge of varying state regulation; preserve the primary role of the states in health insurance oversight and consumer protection and make lower-cost health plan options available.

“Small business health plans are extremely popular with the public – 93 percent of Republicans and 86 percent of Democrats favor legislation to allow them to cross state lines,” Enzi said. “At some point, my colleagues who blocked this bill will have to explain why.”

The bill, “The Health Insurance Marketplace Modernization and Affordability Act,” (S.1955) will allow business and trade associations to band their members together and offer group health coverage on a national or statewide basis in direct response to runaway costs that are driving far too many employers and families from comprehensive health insurance. Since 2000, for example, group premiums for family coverage have grown nearly 60 percent, compared to an underlying inflation rate of 9.7 percent over the same period.

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